

**To:** Levine, Carolyn[Levine.Carolyn@epa.gov]  
**From:** Gutro, Doug  
**Sent:** Wed 8/19/2015 1:59:36 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Senator Murphy's office re: Brownfields and fire hazards

Sure thing

**From:** Levine, Carolyn  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 18, 2015 4:53 PM  
**To:** Gutro, Doug  
**Subject:** Senator Murphy's office re: Brownfields and fire hazards

Hi Doug,

See inquiry from Senator Murphy's staff re: Brownfields grants eligibility.

Both Rudy and also Raquel on my team are out today, and I am swamped on Gold King Mine response. Is this something that R1 can respond to or should I wait until Raquel is back in the office?

Carolyn

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*Carolyn Levine*

*Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations*

*U.S. EPA*

*(202) 564-1859*

*[levine.carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:levine.carolyn@epa.gov)*

**From:** Haman, Patricia  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 18, 2015 4:48 PM

**To:** Bednarczyk, Michael (Murphy)  
**Cc:** Levine, Carolyn  
**Subject:** RE: Brownfields and fire hazards

Hi Mike: I am referring your request to Carolyn Levine who manages the waste and enforcement team here in EPA's Congressional office. Carolyn will work with her team to make sure someone gets back to you soon. Pat

Patricia Haman

Office of Congressional Affairs

U.S. EPA

202-564-2806

**From:** Bednarczyk, Michael (Murphy) [[mailto:Michael\\_Bednarczyk@murphy.senate.gov](mailto:Michael_Bednarczyk@murphy.senate.gov)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 18, 2015 4:22 PM  
**To:** Haman, Patricia  
**Subject:** Brownfields and fire hazards

Hi Pat—

Just following up our conversation with a phone call. Wanted to see public safety/fire hazards enter into the calculus when the EPA determines which site is eligible for brownfields grants. Last week there was a fire in Waterbury at an abandoned 500,000 sq ft factory. The two articles below ran in CT over the weekend, and the attached document highlights incidences of fires at abandoned factories and properties in CT over the last 10 years.

Best,  
Mike

**Blighted, ready to burn**

**Neighboring residents not surprised by fire at abandoned factory**

*BY MICHAEL PUFFER REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN*

WATERBURY — A haze of smoke hung over Bristol Avenue late Saturday afternoon, nearly two days after a fire raged through a huge abandoned factory complex bordering the street.

Thursday's fire may have been alarming, but it was no surprise.

Up close, the abandoned Bristol Babcock Inc. complex looks like the ruins of a long-lost civilization. A narrow path runs along one side of the building, cutting through thick woods. The path is littered with glass shards, trash and building debris.

Small trees and vines cling to the sides of the brick building. Portions have crumbled into tall piles of brick, but the massive structure is still imposing. Plywood partially covers some windows. Razor-topped fencing borders the property. Still, it's clear there are many ways inside. Graffiti is everywhere.

A massive fire broke out about 10 p.m. Thursday and firefighters battled to bring it under control well into Friday. About 4 p.m. Saturday, firefighters continued to pour water on the smoking building, using water cannons dragged through a wooded area between the factory and the road.

The building has long been an eyesore. Neighbors say groups of young people visit to jump around in the ruins, play paintball or do drugs.

Anthony D'Antino, an Italian immigrant, has lived in the neighborhood for 17 years. He works in manufacturing and keeps a clean house. He often sees young adults heading into the property. He saw a group head in Wednesday.

"What do you think, they go fishing?" D'Antino said wryly. "They use this for a playground."

The building is about 118 years old and more than 310,000 square feet. It sits on more than 6.5 acres.

Developer Norman S. Drubner paid \$3 million for the property in December 1986. Bristol Babcock, an electronics manufacturer of control instruments, began moving its production to a Watertown facility the following October. More than 650 people worked for the company at the time.

Now, many neighbors to the factory building hope the city will knock it flat.

"If they don't do something about it, it's going to happen again," D'Antino said. "It's a ticking time-bomb. Plus, it's an eyesore."

Deputy Chief Rick H. Hart said the fire collapsed several floors, "pancaking" them to the ground. The first floor was filled with murky water Saturday afternoon as smoke continued to waft through windows and a ceiling without a roof.

"Unfortunately, residents here have to bear the brunt of the smoke," Hart said.

Hart said the brick walls of the building — several stories high — are now highly unstable. There are no answers yet as to the cause, or if anybody was inside the massive fire. The department could ultimately request state police cadaver-smelling dogs, but it's too hot and dangerous to head in now, Hart said. He said officials will have to gauge later if it's safe to conduct a search.

In the meantime, they continue to douse the building.

"We will probably be here all night," Hart said.

That's fine with Karla Wiltshire, who moved into a sturdy three-bedroom house on Bristol Avenue in April. The presence of the huge abandoned factory gave her pause. But she couldn't argue with the \$76,000 price and otherwise loves her house and neighborhood. Located on the southern edge of the city, Platts Mill is dominated by modest single-family homes.

Wiltshire said she was unable to sleep Friday night for fear of the fire flaring up again and embers drifting onto her home. At a couple of points in the evening, she saw what looked like small glowing campfires burning inside the abandoned factory in the woods across the street.

Neighbor Mark Roberson said he's not been able to bring his grandchildren to his home for two days for fear of smoky air. He said firefighters have advised residents to stay inside with windows closed and air-conditioning running.

Roberson also worried about displaced rats that might leave the factory complex by the Naugatuck River in search of new homes.

One block further away from the factory, the Mattatuck Drum Band held its annual clambake at its headquarters off Highland Avenue Saturday. About two dozen members didn't let the occasional waft of smoke dampen an otherwise beautiful day, as they drank beer, steamed clams and threw horseshoes.

Member Val Caron, of Bantam, said he used to live in the neighborhood. He said an uncle worked in the Bristol Co. for 35 years, back when it was a bustling factory making the finest gauges in the world. Caron and other members of the fife and drum corps agreed the fire was inevitable.

"I thought it was going to burn up years ago," Caron said.

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### **Fire officials prepare special strategies for old, industrial sites**

*BY BRUNO MATARAZZO JR. REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN*

Abandoned factory buildings, relics of the region's Industrial Age, are guarded by a fortress of overgrown trees, fences and other barriers. They can translate into a fire department's nightmare, and a potential neighborhood danger.

Fire chiefs across Northwest Connecticut say blazes like the one late Thursday night at Waterbury's long-vacant Bristol Babcock building demonstrate why they survey vacant and blighted properties, and why their approach often puts safety ahead of any plans to put a fire out.

Saturday morning, smoke still wafted from the burned hulk of the factory in Waterbury's South End. Thursday night, when firefighters got the call, they knew what they faced: Limited access to the building, 30 years vacant, because of trees, a fence and jersey barriers.

Waterbury Fire Chief David Martin said he'd actually prefer limited access and not worry if an empty factory burns as long as nobody's inside. Unwanted televisions, tires and garbage dumped in accessible properties create unexpected hazards, he said. In 2012, firefighters discovered multiple 55-gallon drums of unknown contents during the Nova Dye factory fire on Mill Street, he said. Nova Dye had been empty since 2003.

But the fence and other barriers forced firefighters to delay their response, as they cut through the wire and had to pull hundreds of feet of hose to the fire, Martin said.

The fire department had the Bristol Babcock building listed as one of more than 100 in the city identified as a hazard, both for the neighborhoods in which they stand and for firefighters who respond. The department, with computers on board its trucks, taps into the list for warnings: holes in the floor, a roof in danger of collapsing, illegal dumping.

Winsted Fire Chief Robert Shopey recently starting building a similar list, using software and tablets the department purchased with that need in mind. Vacant mill buildings dot downtown Winsted, more than a dozen in the small town with volunteer firefighters. They already have taken the position: If nobody's inside or near enough to be in danger, let the building burn, Shopey said.

"If there's a fire and it's not a life safety issue, we risk very little for very little," Shopey said. "We risk a lot when there's a perceived life-safety issue there."

The state's fire codes do not necessarily demand direct access for a vacant building, Shopey said. But his and other departments say they attempt to work with property owners to keep at least some routes for trucks and crews should the need arise.

Overgrowth and trees can be an issue, and that's the property owner's responsibility, said Torrington Fire Chief Gary Brunoli.

"Some of our operations, such as Waterbury's, will be delayed. We only have so many people and our vehicles are very big. We try to make sure we stay ahead of buildings that are not occupied," Brunoli said.

He cited Torrington's former Hendey Machine Co. off Summer Street as an example.

"The northern side gate is locked with chains," Brunoli said. If a fire breaks out there, "we know we have to cut the chains."

The Torrington fire trucks carry gas-powered saws and bolt cutters.

"We have enough tools to get through, but it takes time," Brunoli said. "Time in our business will cost people lives or it will cost more property damage."

Contact Bruno Matarazzo Jr. at [bmatarazzo@rep-am.com](mailto:bmatarazzo@rep-am.com) or on Twitter @RA\_BrunoJr.

**Michael Bednarczyk** | Legislative Assistant

Office of Senator Chris Murphy

136 Hart Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: 202.224.4041 | Fax:202.224.9750

**CHRIS**  
**MURPHY**